

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 SS-14 EB-03 INR-05 PM-03

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 6796U

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S E C R E T AMMAN 0497

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, JO, SA, US, EAID, ENRG

SUBJECT: HAWK FINANCING - TALK WITH PRIME MINISTER RIFAI

REF: STATE 020859

1. SAW RIFAI JANUARY 28 AND DISCUSSED WITH HIM HAWK FINANCING ISSUE. HE SAID THAT OUR APPROACH HAD COME LIKE A BOMBSHELL. I TOLD HIM WHAT I HAD RECEIVED IN REFTEL ABOUT TRAINING CONTINUING AND WORKING OUT A WAY TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL LEEWAY. HE SAID HE WAS VERY PLEASED ABOUT THAT NEWS.

2. HE TOLD ME THAT KING'S INITIAL REACTION HAD BEEN BAD AND HE HAD SPENT A DIFFICULT AFTERNOON CONVINCING KING THAT THIS WAS A BUREAUCRATIC AND NOT A POLITICAL QUESTION. (AS REPORTED ELSEWHERE, I WAS SUBSEQUENTLY IN TOUCH WITH THE KING WHO SEEMED TO RELAX A BIT WHEN I GAVE HIM THE BRIGHTER NEWS ABOUT HOW WE INTEND TO HANDLE THE HAWK FINANCING.) BOTH RIFAI AND KING ARE ANXIOUS TO SETTLE THE ISSUE AND BOTH ARE PREPARED TO KEEP THE HEAT ON THE SAUDIS. WHAT RIFAI SAYS HE BELIEVES WE SHOULD BOTH BE CAREFUL ABOUT IS PRESENTING THE SAUDIS WITH SOME SORT OF "ULTIMATUM" WHICH THEY CAN TURN AROUND AND LEAN ON AS AN EXCUSE FOR DELAYING OR OTHERWISE NOT FUNDING

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US HAWKS.

3. RIFAI THEN TOLD ME THAT HE WAS GOING TO SAUDI ARABIA ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1 TO TALK WITH FAHD AND SEE IF HE COULD NAIL THE ISSUE DOWN. HE SAID HE HOPED I WOULD BE ABLE TO TELL HIM BEFORE HE LEAVES EXACTLY WHERE THE ISSUE STANDS AND SOMETHING ABOUT THE BACKGROUND SO THAT HE WILL KNOW ENOUGH TO PRESENT THE SAUDIS WITH A CLEAR PICTURE. IT WILL BE ESPECIALLY HELPFUL TO HAVE SOME BACKGROUND HERE ALSO TO MAKE CLEAR TO KING THAT ISSUE WAS DOMESTIC AND STATUTORY AND NOT POLITICAL AND ANTI-JORDANIAN. INFOR FOR RIFAI SHOULD ARRIVE BY COB LOCAL SAT, JAN 31.

4. RIFAI ALSO ADDED THAT SAUDIS HAD GIVEN COMMITMENT SPECIFICALLY TO PAY 116 MILLION DOLLARS ON TAPLINE ACCOUNT WHICH CLEARS UP FULL PAST INDEBTEDNESS, AND WILL ADD 40 MILLION IN BUDGET SUPPORT AT THE BEGINNING AND \$40 MILLION AT END OF THIS YEAR TO PAY FOR JORDANIAN PURCHASES OF CRUDE FROM THE TAPLINE. HE SAID AGREEMENT HAD BEEN SIGNED YESTERDAY WITH TAPLINE OFFICIALS. EXTRA BUDGET SUBSIDY OF \$80M WILL NOT RPT NOT BE PUBLICLY IDENTIFIED WITH JORDANIAN CRUDE PURCHASES.
PICKERING

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